

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSM-03 IO-13 OMB-01 DHA-02 ORM-02

AID-05 SAM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SCCT-01 TRSE-00 AF-08 CU-02 OPR-02 /109 W

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R 201249Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1553

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE, SY

SUBJECT: AN ACADEMIC VIEW OF THE LEBANESE SITUATION

1. SUMMARY: LEBANESE POLITICAL SCIENTIST ADNAN ISKANDAR IS SKEPTICAL THAT LEBANESE POLITICAL SYSTEM CAN BE READILY PATCHED UP AND DEPLORES LACK OF SERIOUS EFFORT TO STUDY THE IMPACT PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION WOLPSTF E#ON LEBANESE POLITICS. JUNBLATT IS ONLY LEBANESE POLITICIAN WHO HAS AUTHENTICALLY RESPONDED TO POLITICAL REFORM NEEDS, BUT HE IS ALIENATING MODERATES WHO MIGHT SUPPORT HIM. ARAB WORLD RESPONSE TO CRISIS HAS REVEALED WVPOSSIBILITY OF CONCERTED ARAB POLITICAL ACTION AND HYPOCRISY OF THOSE ARABS PROFESSING SUPPORT OF PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT. PLO MAY BE TAKEN OVER BY RADICALS, NOW THAT SYRIAN MOVES HAVE PROVEN TO WORLD FUTILITY OF MODERATE PALESTINIAN APPROACH. AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
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WILL STRUGGLE ON, AND NEEDS USG FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF MET WITH DR. ADNAN ISKANDAR, PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AT AUB ON AUG 18. ISKANDAR, A GREEK ORTHODOX, STUDIED POLITICAL SCIENCE AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN WASHINGTON AND TEACHES PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND VARIOUS OTHER POLITICAL ACIENCE COURSES AT AUB.

3. CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS. ISKANDAR NOTED THAT MOST LEBANESE POLITICIANS AGREE ON NEED FOR, OR AT LEAST ACCEPT INEVITABILITY OF, CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS. MOST TALK OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION ALMOST AS PANACEA. HOWEVER, AS POLITICAL SCIENTIST, HE SAID HE HAD STUDIED IDEA OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION, WHICH IS ULTIMATELY THE MOST COMPLEX ELECTORAL SYSTEM POSSIBLE. IN LEBANON IT WOULD LEAD TO CREATION OF MULTIPLICITY OF SMALL PARTIES, AND PARTIES WOULD BE BUILT AROUND INDIVIDUAL LEADERS RATHER THAN POLITICAL PLATFORMS. LEBANESE ADVOCATES OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION DO NOT REALIZE THAT IT IS ONE THING TO ELECT A PARLIAMENT, QUITE ANOTHER FOR A PARLIAMENT TO ESTABLISH VIABLE GOVERNMENT. IT WOULD BE GOOD IDEA FOR SARKIS TO APPOINT COMMISSION TO SERIOUSLY STUDY ALL THE RAMIFICATIONS AND COME UP WITH VIABLE PLAN.

4. LEBANESE SYSTEM OF THE FUTURE. ISKANDAR SAID THERE WERE NO SIGNS AT ALL OF EMERGENCE OF NEW, YOUNGER LEBANESE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP. IT IS STILL FEUDAL POLITICS, IN WHICH PARENTAGE IS MOST IMPORTANT SINGLE ELEMENT IN ANY POLITICIANS CAREER. MOST DEPUTIES WERE LAWYERS, TNED TO APPROACH PROBLEMS IN NARROW, LEGALISTIC TERMS, AND ARE UNAWARE OF UNDERLYING LEBANESE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

5. JUNBLATT AND THE LEFT. LEBANON NEEDS POLITICAL REFORMS, BUT ONLY JUNBLATT AMONG EXISTING FIRST-LINE POLITICIANS HAS TRIED TO RESPOND. CHRISTIANS ARE CONSERVATIVE; ESTABLISHED MOSLEM LEADERSHIP IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INEFFECTIVE. JUNBLATT, ALTHOUGH BUILDING ON PERSONALIZED TRIBAL POLITICAL BASE, HAD REAL UNDERSTANDING OF NEEDS OF POLITICAL SYSTEM. FURTHER, HE IS ONLY LEBANESE POLITICIAN WHO TRIES TO RESPOND TO PERCEPTIONS AND NEEDS OF POLITICAL YOUNGER GENERATION. IT HAS BEEN LEBANESE TRAGEDY THAT MOSLEM ESTABLISHMENT HAS BY-AND-LARGE IGNORED JUNBLATT. ISKANDAR SPOKE OF "SILENT

MAJORITY" OF LEBANESE WHO ARE DISAFFECTED WITH OLD
POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT WITH ITS INCOMPETENCE,
NEPOTISM AND CLOSE ALLIANCES WITH BUSINESS
COMMUNITY. MANY LEBANESE
DTDIQLTX#SUPPORT JUNBLATT
WERE IT NOT FOR HIS COMMUNIST AND PALESTINIAN
CONNECTIONS. JUNBLATT HAS ALSO LOST POPULARITY
RECENTLY, BECAUSE OF PHYSICAL HARDSHIPS GROWING
OUT OF WAR, WHICH LEBANESE POPULATION BLAMES ON
PALESTINIANS AND THEIR ALLIES. HE SAID SHIITES OF
SOUTH LEBANON, UNLIKE THOSE ELSEWHERE, STILL
ACTIVELY SUPPORT JUNBLATT'S POLITICAL PROGRAM.

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6. SYRIAN ROLE. ISKANDAR CHARACTERIZED RECENT
SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN AGREEMENT AS PALESTINIAN
CAPITULATION. ITS FAILURE IS DUE ENTIRELY TO SYRIAN
UNWILLINGNESS TO SEE IT WORK. ISKANDAR CONCLUDES
THAT SYRIANS REALLY DO, AFTER ALL, HOPE FOR COMPLETE

MILITARY SOLUTION.

7. ROLE OF ARAB WORLD. RESPONSE OF ARAB WORLD TO LEBANESE PROBLEM, IN ISKANDAR'S VIEW, SHOWS ARAB INEFFECTIVENESS AND SHALLOWNESS OF ARAB NATIONALIST SENTIMENT. FEW ARAB COUNTRIES HAVE ACTIVELY SUPPORTED ARAB LEAGUE INITIATIVES BY SENDING TROOPS TO ARAB LEAGUE FORCE OR BY ENCOURAGING VOLUNTEERS TO ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER. RESPONSES OF ARABS TO EARLIER CRISES WERE MUCH MORE SERIOUS. IN 1967 OR 1973, THOUSANDS OF ARABS IN OTHER COUNTRIES VOLUNTEERED TO FIGHT AGAINST ISRAEL, AND THEIR GOVERNMENTS FOUND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VERY EXPEDITIOUS MEANS TO GET MANY OF THEM TO WAR ZONE. DEVELOPMENT OF LEBANESE CRISIS SHOWS THAT "ARAB NATIONALISM" REALLY MEANS JUST ONE THING-- OPPOSITION TO ISRAEL. EVEN MOST RADICAL STATES, IRAQ AND LIBYA, WERE RESPONDING WITH LITTLE MORE THAN TOKENISM, AND ONLY BECAUSE OF THEIR OWN INTERNAL POLITICAL PRESSURES. NOT ONE ARAB STATE, HE OBSERVED, HAS MADE ISSUE OF RECENT ISRAELI NAVAL ACTIVITIES OFF SIDON AND TYRE. HISTORICAL TRAGEDY OF LEBANESE WAR, ISKANDAR SAID, WAS THAT IT HAS PITTED AGAINST EACH OTHER THE TWO MOST ENLIGHTENED AND ADVANCED GROUPS IN THE ARAB WORLD--LEBANESE CHRISTIANS AND PALESTINIANS.

8. PALESTINIAN POSITION. PLO IS INTERNALLY WEAK AND ISOLATED. U.S., HE SAID, AS WELL AS MANY ARAB LEADERS, DISLIKES PLO LEADERSHIP. PROBLEM IS THAT EVOLUTION OF LEBANESE SITUATION IS DEMONSTRATING CORRECTNESS OF MOST IDEOLOGICALLY EXTREME PALESTINIAN TENDENCIES. LEBANESE WAR IS PROVING THAT, AS DR. HABASH SAYS, LIBERATION OF PALESTINE IS POSSIBLE ONLY THROUGH REVOLUTION IN ENTIRE ARAB WORLD. ISKANDAR NOTED THAT NEW YORK TIMES RECENTLY HAD SAID TIME MAY BE RIPE FOR CHANGE OF PLO LEADERSHIP. CHANCES ARE, HOWEVER, THAT CHANGE WILL BRING FAR MORE EXTREME PLO LEADERSHIP. FACED WITH CHALLENGE TO ITS VERY SURVIVAL AS INDEPENDENT ENTITY, HE SAID, PLO IS NOT GOING TO REACT WITH COMPROMISES.

9. AUB. ISKANDAR SAID AUB STUDENT ENROLLMENT IS NOW DOWN FROM ABOUT 5000 TO ABOUT 1200, AND THAT ONLY ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THOSE ARE PAYING TUITION. FACULTY IS DOWN FROM ABOUT 550 TO ABOUT 250. UNIVERSITY IS DETTYOINED TO STAY OPEN, BUT REAL FINANCIAL CRISIS IS LOOMING. USG IS HELPING AUB HOSPITAL IN BIG WAY, RESPONDING TO MOST IMMEDIATE

NEEDS. BUT HE HOPED USG WOULD APPRECIATE
IMPORTANCE OF AUB TO RECONSTRUCTION OF LEBANON,
AND HELP KEEP IT IN OPERATION. LEBANON COULD ALWAYS
IMPORT TECHNICIANS--MEDICAL DOCTORS, ENGINEERS, ETC.,
BUT ONLY LEBANESE COULD BECOME EFFECTIVE CIVIL
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ADMINISTRATORS, ECONOMISTS AND POLITICIANS IN LEBANESE
POLITICAL MILIEU.

10. COMMENT: AS WE FOCUS ON PALESTINIAN-CHRISTIAN AND
PALESTINIAN-SYRIAN WAR, IT IS WORTHWHILE TO BE
REMINDING THAT THERE IS PURELY LEBANESE
DIMENSION TO THIS WAR AS WELL. WE SHARE DR. ISKANDAR'S
VIEW THAT THE OLD LEBANESE SYSTEM HAS COLLAPSED,
BUT THAT A NEW POLITICAL GENERATION, OPERATING UNDER
NEW GROUND RULES, HAS NOT YET EMERGED. THE
COMBINATION OF LEBANESE POLITICAL INCOMPETENCE,
PALESTINIAN DETERMINATION NOT TO BE WIPED OUT, AND
SYRIAN DOGGEDNESS MAKE THE PROSPECTS FOR AN EARLY
SETTLEMENT DIM. ISKANDAR, LIKE ALL BEIRUTIS, IS DEEPLY
DISTRESSED BY THE WAR, IMMEDIATE SUFFERING IT HAS
CAUSED, AND LONG TERM DAMAGE WHICH MAY NEVER BE
REPAIRED. IT DID HOWEVER HAVE ONE MINOR ATO EAGE
FOR A PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE: HE NOW HAD A
RESEARCH WORKSHOP FOR HIS STUDENTS WHICH SURPASSES
THAT OF ANY OF HIS ACADEMIC COLLEAGUES IN OTHER
FIELDS--THE STREETS OF BEIRUT.
HUNT

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